

1    What is claimed is:

2    1.    A system of on-line merchandising at a potentially reduced  
3    price, the system comprising:

4    A.    a marketplace accessible on line and comprising a controlling  
5    entity and a merchandise collection,

6    B.    a distribution format structured to award preselected  
7    merchandise to at least one of a restricted number of  
8    customers,

9    C.    a bid pool comprising a predetermined number of bids, each bid  
10   available for purchase and representative of an opportunity  
11   for award of the preselected merchandise,

12   D.    each bid comprising a monetary value equal to a predetermined  
13   share of the purchase price of the preselected merchandise,  
14   and

15   E.    said distribution format further structured to award the  
16   preselected merchandise at a reduced price to a selected one  
17   of the restricted number of customers and to a customer having  
18   purchased a sufficient number of bids to at least  
19   substantially equal the purchase price of the preselected  
20   merchandise.

21   2.    A system as recited in claim 1 wherein said distribution  
22   format comprises a raffle application, said raffle application  
23   participated in by the restricted number of customers.

24   3.    A system as recited in claim 1 wherein the selected one of the  
25   restricted number of customers is determined by a random

1 selection.

2 4. A system as recited in claim 1 wherein said merchandise  
3 collection comprises a displayed array of merchandise  
4 accessible on line.

5 5. A system as recited in claim 1 wherein said bid pool is  
6 structured for on-line access to and purchase of said  
7 predetermined number of bids.

8 6. A system as recited in claim 5 wherein instigation of the  
9 distribution format is responsive to exhaustion of said bid  
10 pool through purchase of all said predetermined number of  
11 bids.

12 7. A system as recited in claim 6 wherein each of said restricted  
13 number of customers is defined by a purchase of at least one  
14 of said plurality of bids.

15 8. A system as recited in claim 7 wherein any one of said  
16 restricted number of customers may purchase one or more bids  
17 until said bid pool is exhausted.

18 9. A system as recited in claim 5 wherein on-line access to said  
19 bid pool comprises a visual display of purchased and un-  
20 purchased bids.

21 10. A system as recited in claim 1 wherein a collective monetary  
22 amount of all the predetermined number of bids in the bid pool  
23 is equal to the purchase price of the preselected merchandise.

24 11. A system as recited in claim 10 wherein the predetermined  
25 number of bids in the bid pool is at least partially

determined by an estimated bid price.

12. A system as recited in claim 11 wherein the predetermined number of bids in the bid pool is at least partially determined by an estimated time period required to exhaust the bid pool through purchase.

13. A system as recited in claim 10 wherein the predetermined number of bids in the bid pool is at least partially determined by an estimated time period required to exhaust the bid pool through purchase.

14. A system as recited in claim 1 wherein said bid pool further includes an automatic bid format.

15. A system as recited in claim 14 wherein said automatic bid format comprises a repetitive automatic purchase of at least one bid from each of a plurality of different bid pools.

16. A system as recited in claim 15 wherein each of said plurality of different bid pools is associated with the award of substantially equivalent preselected merchandise.

17. A system as recited in claim 1 further including a compensation application comprising compensation paid to the controlling entity by customers awarded the preselected merchandise.

18. A system as recited in claim 17 wherein said compensation application comprises a commission fee at least partially defined by a predetermined percentage of a customer's savings on the awarded preselected merchandise.

1 19. A system as recited in claim 18 wherein the customer's savings  
2 is at least partially determined by a monetary difference  
3 between the purchase price of the awarded merchandise and the  
4 monetary value of the total number of bids purchased by the  
5 selected one customer on the awarded merchandise.

6 20. A system as recited in claim 19 wherein said reduced price is  
7 at least partially defined as the monetary value of the total  
8 number of bids purchased by the selected one customer for  
9 award of the preselected merchandise in addition to the  
10 commission fee.

11 21. A system as recited in claim 20 wherein the commission fee is  
12 inversely proportional to the monetary value of the total  
13 number of bids purchased for the preselected merchandise by  
14 the selected one customer.

15 22. A method of on-line merchandising at a potentially reduced  
16 price, said method comprising:

17 displaying a merchandise collection by on-line access,  
18 establishing at least one bid pool comprising a  
19 predetermined number of bids each being representative of an  
20 opportunity to be awarded preselected merchandise,

21 presenting the predetermined number of bids for on-line  
22 purchase,

23 structuring each of the bids to represent a predetermined  
24 share of the purchase price of the preselected merchandise,

25 awarding the preselected merchandise at a reduced price

1 to at least one customer of a restricted number of customers having  
2 purchased at least one bid, and

3           awarding the preselected merchandise to any customer  
4 having purchased a sufficient number of bids to at least  
5 substantially equal the purchase price of the preselected  
6 merchandise.

7 23. A method as recited in claim 22 comprising selecting the one  
8 customer of the restricted number of customers by random  
9 selection.

10 24. A method as recited in claim 22 comprising structuring each of  
11 the predetermined number of bids to represent an equal  
12 opportunity to be awarded the preselected merchandise.

13 25. A method as recited in claim 24 comprising allowing each of  
14 the plurality of customers to purchase one or more bids until  
15 the bid pool is exhausted.

16 26. A method as recited in claim 25 comprising requiring the pre-  
17 determined number of customers to purchase at least one bid.

18 27. A method as recited in claim 25 comprising requiring the  
19 restricted number of customers to be at least two in number.

20 28. A method as recited in claim 22 comprising activating at least  
21 a portion of the distribution format subsequent to exhaustion  
22 of the bid pool.

23 29. A method as recited in claim 22 comprising structuring the  
24 value of each of the plurality of bids of a common bid pool to  
25 be equal.

1     30. A method as recited in claim 29 comprising structuring the  
2         collective value of the plurality of bids of a common bid pool  
3         to be equal to the purchase price of the preselected  
4         merchandise.

5     31. A method as recited in claim 22 comprising determining the  
6         number of the plurality of bids in a common bid pool by an  
7         estimated bid price.

8     32. A method as recited in claim 31 comprising further determining  
9         the number of the plurality of bids in a common bid pool by an  
10        estimated time period needed to exhaust the bid pool.

11    33. A method as recited in claim 22 further determining the number  
12       of the plurality of bids in a common bid pool by an estimated  
13       time period needed to exhaust the bid pool.

14    34. A method as recited in claim 22 further comprising providing  
15       for the repetitive, automatic purchase by any customer of at  
16       least one bid from each of a plurality of different bid pools  
17       associated with the preselected merchandise.

18    35. A method as recited in claim 34 comprising associating each of  
19       the plurality of different bid pools with substantially  
20       equivalent preselected merchandise.

21    36. A method as recited in claim 22 requiring the payment of a  
22       commission fee by the at least one customer awarded the  
23       preselected merchandise at the reduced price.

24    37. A process as recited in claim 36 comprising defining the  
25       commission fee as a predetermined percentage of the monetary

1 difference between the purchase price of the awarded  
2 merchandise and the monetary value of the total number of bids  
3 purchased by the at least one customer on the awarded  
4 merchandise.

5 38. A method as recited in claim 37 comprising defining the  
6 reduced price as the monetary value of the total number of  
7 bids purchased by the at least one customer for the awarded  
8 merchandise plus the commission fee.

9 39. A method as recited in claim 22 comprising defining the  
10 reduced price as at least the monetary value of the total  
11 number of bids purchased by the at least one customer for the  
12 awarded merchandise.

13 40. A method as recited in claim 39 comprising further defining  
14 the reduced price as at least the monetary value of the total  
15 number of bids purchased by the at least one customer for the  
16 awarded merchandise plus a commission fee.

17 41. A system of on-line merchandising at a potentially reduced  
18 price, said system comprising:

19 a marketplace accessible on line and comprising a  
20 merchandise collection,

21 a distribution format structured to award preselected  
22 merchandise of the merchandise collection to at least one of a  
23 plurality of customers,

24 a bid pool comprising a plurality of bids, each of said  
25 plurality of bids available for on-line purchase and representing

1 an equal opportunity for award of the preselected merchandise, and  
2 said distribution format further structured to award the  
3 preselected merchandise at a reduced price to one of the plurality  
4 of customers having purchased a winning bid.

5 42. A system as recited in claim 41 wherein said distribution  
6 format further comprises an award of the preselected  
7 merchandise to any customer having purchased a plurality of  
8 bids with a collective monetary value at least substantially  
9 equal to a purchase price of the preselected merchandise.

10 43. A system as recited in claim 41 wherein the reduced price of  
11 the awarded preselected merchandise is at least partially  
12 defined by the monetary value of the total number of bids  
13 purchased by the one customer for the preselected merchandise.

14 44. A system as recited in claim 43 wherein the reduced price is  
15 further defined by the additional payment of a commission fee.

16 45. A system as recited in claim 44 wherein the commission fee is  
17 defined as a pre-determined percentage of the monetary  
18 difference between the purchase price of the awarded  
19 merchandise and the monetary value of the total number of bids  
20 purchased by the at least one customer on the awarded  
21 merchandise.

22 46. A system of on-line merchandising comprising:  
23 a marketplace accessible on-line and comprising a collection  
24 of preselected merchandise,  
25 said preselected merchandise including an electronic gift



1 card,

2 a distribution format structured to award preselected  
3 merchandise including said electronic gift card to at least one of  
4 a plurality of customers,

5 a bid pool comprising a plurality of bids each available for  
6 on-line purchase and representing an opportunity for award of said  
7 preselected merchandise, and

8 said distribution format further structured to award at least  
9 said electronic gift card at a reduced price to one of the  
10 plurality of customers having purchased a winning bid.

11 47. A system as recited in claim 46 wherein said electronic gift  
12 card is structured to represent any one of a plurality of  
13 predetermined monetary values.

14 48. A system as recited in claim 47 wherein said electronic gift  
15 card is structured to be commercially transacted with any of  
16 a plurality of vendors.

17 49. A system as recited in claim 48 wherein said commercial  
18 transaction comprises an exchange of said electronic gift card  
19 for merchandise of commensurate monetary value of any of the  
20 plurality of vendors.

21 50. A system as recited in claim 49 wherein said commercial  
22 transaction comprises an on-line transaction.

23 51. A system as recited in claim 49 wherein said commercial  
24 transaction comprises a walk-in transaction.

25 52. A system as recited in claim 48 wherein said commercial

1 transaction comprises an exchange of said electronic gift card  
2 for a vendor's gift certificate of any of the plurality of  
3 vendors.

4 53. A system as recited in claim 52 wherein said commercial  
5 transaction comprises an on-line transaction.

6 54. A system as recited in claim 48 wherein said electronic gift  
7 card is structured for delivery to a recipient, said  
8 commercial transaction being conducted between the recipient  
9 and any of the plurality of vendors.

10 55. A system as recited in claim 54 wherein said commercial  
11 transaction comprises an on-line transaction.

12 56. A system as recited in claim 54 wherein said commercial  
13 transaction comprises a walk-in transaction.